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A MESSAGE FROM THE REGIONAL DIRECTOR

Welcome to the last issue of ABSTRACT for 2008.

In the July issue of ABSTRACT, I was pleased to report that on June 5 the Australian Statistician Brian Pink and the Chief Executive Chief Minister's Department Andrew Cappie-Wood signed the ACT Information Development Plan 2008-2011 (IDP). I'd like to thank all those involved in developing the Plan with a particular thank you to Pam Davoren, Luke McAlary, Dan Stewart (Chief Minister's Department) and the ACT Government Information Development Steering Committee (IDSC).

In coming months our office will work with the IDSC, chaired by Pam Davoren, to progress the key activities listed in the IDP. I would encourage you to have a look at the activities and contact me with ideas. You can view the IDP on any of these three websites: Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS); Chief Minister's Department and the National Statistical Service (NSS).

Confronting our demographic challenge is of interest to all in the Canberra community and

the September release of ACT population projections for 2008 to 2056 will give analysts some good working data for future planning. We also look forward to working with the newly appointed ACT Demographer, Gemma Wood (formerly of the ABS ACT Office) and in other forums on demographic issues for the ACT and Region.

There is a lot happening in the COAG (Council of Australian Governments) and as part of the new national performance reporting framework the ABS looks forward to progressing statistical issues associated with the various initiatives.

On November 27 the third issue of **In fACT: Statistical Information on the ACT and Region** (cat. no. 1308.8) will be released. This electronic only publication is up on the ABS website and I welcome any comments.

I would like to remind policy and decision makers that registrations are still open for the NatStats08 Conference on Working Together for an Informed Australian Society being held from November 19 -21 at the Crown Promenade Hotel, Melbourne hosted by ABS. For more information see [NSS NatStats08 website](#) or talk to Mark Lound, ABS, (02) 6252 6325. I will be attending and look forward to seeing you there.

Finally, I would like to wish you a 'Merry Christmas' and a 'Happy New Year'.

Karen Macdonald
ACT Regional Director

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"USING 2006 CENSUS STATISTICS ON RELIGION"

This article was contributed by:

Dr James JUPP AM, FASSA who is Director of the Centre for Immigration and Multicultural Studies within the Australian Demographic and Social Research Institute at the Australian National University.

Australia has provided figures of religious allegiance since the colonial days, in which it differs from both the United Kingdom and the United States. Britain has only changed its policy in the last two Censuses, not having published such information since a single effort in 1851. The United States, lawyers have confirmed, is prevented from seeking such information because of a Constitutional prohibition on state/religious relations.

This information is of growing interest because of the expansion of religiously provided schools, hospitals, welfare services in a society which is often described as 'secular' and which has seen the rise of religions other than Christianity only in the past thirty years. Thirty per cent either do not reply to the optional question or state that they have 'no religion'. But that still leaves a large majority who do reply, most of them Christians in a wide spread of denominations. Catholics are prominent, since they replaced Anglicans forty years ago.

Last year I was awarded an Australian Research Council Discovery grant on the broad topic of "Researching the Social Role of Religion in Australia", a project which is now reaching completion. This allowed me to purchase a major set of national and local figures from the ABS which go beyond those available in the freely published data. On a base of over 100 different denominations, I could analyse not only the largest followings (in order Catholics; Anglicans; Uniting Church; Presbyterian; Buddhism; Greek Orthodox; Islam; and Baptist), but also tiny but often interesting groups with as few as 1000 followers. These tables were processed for me by the ACT Office of the ABS, with speed and efficiency.

Among interesting findings were that 'non-believers' were often professional people living in middle-class suburbs. In contrast, the working class and 'ethnic' suburbs of the major cities were much more religious, at least by their own account. This was largely due to the high numbers claiming to be Catholics, Buddhists, Orthodox or Muslims. Oddly enough, Sydney emerged as less likely to claim 'no religion' than any other major city.

Some interesting little puzzles could be followed up. One of the important languages spoken at home by Anglicans was Dinka, an aboriginal tongue from Sudan. Why? Clearly because of the major role of Christian churches in nominating refugee and humanitarian immigrants from that war-torn country. Another discovery was that at least half the small number claiming to be Syrian Orthodox came from south India and spoke Malayalam. They were not Syrian Arabs at all. Rather they came from the first Christian community established in India by the apostle St Thomas, at least by their own account, nearly two thousand years ago.

There are many more treasures buried in this wealth of information and I hope to reveal them in my subsequent work. Although not religious myself, I do regard religious information as important and hope that more social scientists will take advantage of it in the future.



Caption: Valdis Juskevics and Jennie Dunn (ABS ACT office) present the information consultancy report to Dr James Jupp.

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CANBERRANS AT WORK

The average number of usual residents employed full time in the ACT for the year ending September 2008 was 143,500.

The most common occupation (major group) of employed persons in the ACT in August quarter 2008 was Professionals.

A smaller proportion of workers in the ACT worked 41 hours or more per week and larger proportion worked between 35-40 hours.

The latest indicators on the Labour Force, Consumer Price Index and State Accounts are brought together in **In fACT- Statistical Information on the ACT and Region** (cat. no.

1303.8), to be released on the 27th of November 2008.

In fACT is available free of charge on the ABS website.

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NATIONAL REGIONAL PROFILE – FOR USERS OF SMALL AREA DATA

The fourth edition of the **National Regional Profile** (NRP) was released on 28 July. The NRP provides a brief statistical summary of key economic and social information for various levels of the **Australian Standard Geographic Classification** (ASGC), including Statistical Local Areas (SLAs) and Local Government Areas (LGAs), making the NRP a useful tool and valuable resource for users of small area data. Data in the NRP spans the years 2002 to 2006, where available, with data based on the geographical boundaries described in the 2006 edition of the ASGC.

Data are provided in the NRP from a variety of ABS and non-ABS sources covering: population characteristics, births and deaths, unemployment, taxable income, wage and salary earners, building approvals and motor vehicle sales etc., enabling users to obtain a snapshot of selected characteristics of a local area or to compare the same characteristics across areas. Some of the data in the NRP is not available anywhere else on the ABS website in the same level of detail.

This release of the NRP contains a number of improvements on the previous edition including a new NRP Welcome Page to assist users in navigating through the product and locating data, 'Help' information including a frequently asked questions guide and improved mapping including the introduction of LGA maps in this edition. Another new Help feature is a series of videos showing how to use the NRP. These can be found from the NRP Video Demonstration link on the Welcome Page.

We are interested in your feedback on the NRP. When using the NRP please take a few minutes to fill in the Feedback form available from the menu bar on the Welcome Page. Your responses will contribute to improving products and services in the future.

For further information on the NRP please email: regional.statistics@abs.gov.au

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DON'T MISS OUT!

The NatStats08 Conference will provide a unique opportunity for key stakeholders from across government, business and academia to discuss strategies for improving statistics for the nation. The NatStats08 Conference program will address a range of issues regarding national statistics. The focus of the conference will be on measuring progress in Australian society and future information needs. An array of high profile policy and decision makers from across the community have been invited to ensure a varied and exciting program.

The conference program has been designed with policy and decision makers in mind. Hear a range of speakers from overseas organisations, senior staff from government departments from across all jurisdictions, as well as experts from the community and leading academics. The NatStats08 Conference will take place in one of Melbourne's premier conference venues, the Crown Promenade, home to the Crown conference centre.

To register your interest in attending the conference email: natstats@con-sol.com or visit the NSS NatStats08 website.

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RECENT RELEASES



A SNAPSHOT OF AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY ...

Australian Social Trends, 2008 (cat. no. 4102.0) presents information on a wide range of social issues and areas of public policy concern. The publication covers topics including family and community, health, education, work and housing. It also provides international comparisons and includes data cubes containing a ten-year time series of key indicators at both national and state/territory level.

For further information contact the Director of Social and Progress Reporting, Linda Fardell on (02) 6252 7187.

Social Trends in the Australian Capital Territory

- **Internet connections**

In 2006-07, three-quarters (75%) of homes in the ACT had the Internet connected, with broadband out-numbering dial-up connections by a factor of two-to-one.

- **Risk taking**

In 2004-05, one in six (17%) people in the ACT aged 18-24 years drank to risky or high risky levels, compared with 15% nationally.

- **First home buyers**

In 2005-06, first home buyers in the ACT had the highest average mortgages (along with NSW) of around \$250,000. This compares with the national average for first home buyers of \$213,000.

- **Public transport**

In 2006, around one in twelve (8%) people in Canberra used public transport to get to work or study, down from 11% in 1996. Around eight in ten people (82%) travelled by private vehicle, while one in ten (10%) either walked or rode a bike.

- **Education**

More people in the ACT now have qualifications such as a degree, diploma or certificate (71% of all people aged 25-64 years in 2007, up from 58% in 1997).

- **Volunteers**

In 2006, around one in five people in the ACT were regular volunteers with women (24%) more likely to volunteer than men (20%).

IS LIFE IN AUSTRALIA GETTING BETTER? HOW DOES THE ACT COMPARE?

The ABS released the latest update of **Measures of Australia's Progress: Summary Indicators** (cat. no. 1383.0.55.001) in September 2008. This publication is designed to help Australians assess how our society, economy and environment are developing. It provides a suite of indicators which people can use to assess Australia's progress.

The publication shows that:

We're living longer. A boy born in Australia in 2006 could expect to live to 79 (4 years longer than a boy born in 1996) while a girl could expect to reach 84 (3 years longer than a girl born in 1996). The trend towards longer life expectancy is also evident in the ACT where a boy born in 2006 could expect to live to 80 (up from 77 in 1996) and girls could expect to live to 84 (up from 82 in 1996)

We're more educated. Between 1997 and 2007 the proportion of 25-64 year olds in Australia with a non-school qualification such as a degree or certificate rose from 46% to 59%. The ACT, which has a higher proportion of people with non-school qualifications, also saw an increase over the ten years to 2007 (from 58% to 71%).

We're earning more. Australia's real (i.e. adjusted to remove the effects of price change) gross income per person rose at an average rate of 3.0% per year between June 1997 and June 2007, reaching around \$48,600 in 2007. Incomes were considerably higher in the ACT at around \$62,400 per person in 2007, also having risen by around 3.0% per year on average over the last decade.

There was a small increase in the rate of people who had experienced a 'personal crime' (assault, sexual assault or robbery) between 1998 and 2005, from 4.8% to 5.3%. The rate of household crime (break-ins and car theft), on the other hand, fell from 9.0% to 6.2% over the same period. Though they were higher than the national average the ACT rate of both personal and household crime fell between 1998 and 2005 (to 5.8% and 7.6% respectively).

There's mixed news on the environment. This is a hard area to measure. The available data suggests some decline in Australia's biodiversity in the last decade, partly encapsulated in a rise in the number of terrestrial bird and mammal species assessed as extinct, endangered or vulnerable (up 14% in 2007 compared with 2000). On the other hand, air quality in Australia is generally good. Net greenhouse gas emissions fell from 32.4 tonnes of CO₂ per person in 1990 to 27.8 tonnes per person in 2006. The ACT had by far the lowest rate of

CO2 emissions per person, with 3.3 tonnes per person in 2006.

For more information contact Kerry O'Brien (02) 6252 5242.

Both publications (cat. nos. 4102.0, 1383.0.55.001) are available free of charge on the ABS website.

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HOUSING STATISTICS WORKSHOPS

In June and July, the ABS hosted two housing statistics workshops in Canberra to obtain ACT input into the development of a Housing (IDP). Both workshops were well attended by housing data users from a range of government agencies, community organisations and industry groups.

The workshop participants provided valuable input into key housing policy and research issues, unmet information requirements and future data needs. Particular issues raised included the need for better data on the housing stock, Indigenous housing, housing transitions for people with complex needs, and the impact of transport and other infrastructure costs on assessments of housing costs and affordability.

The Housing IDP is an agreement between data users and providers on actions to improve housing statistics to meet key policy and research needs. The ABS has recently completed a series of stakeholder workshops across Australia. The ABS will now work with data providers to establish and implement an agreed set of actions to improve the range of housing information available.

For further information on the Housing IDP, contact Elise Kennedy on (02) 6252 5508.



Caption: Clockwise from back right: Agata Pukiewicz (CARE Inc), Deborah Phippen (Tenants Union ACT), Llewellyn Reynders (ACTCOSS) [obscured], Nicholas Biddle (ANU), Karen Macdonald (ABS), John Billing (ABS), Jerry Howard (MBA), Eugene Dyriw (MBA), Nuriye Kece (ACTPLA), Sharmin Aziz (ACTPLA), Binod Nepal (NATSEM), Danny O'Dea (ACT Treasury), Anne Jenkins (DHCS), Bob McColl (ABS), Geoff McDonald (DHCS), Elise Kennedy (ABS)

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IMPROVED STATISTICS FOR THE ACT

The **ACT Information Development Plan 2008-2011** (IDP) was signed on 5 June 2008 by Brian Pink, Australian Statistician and Andrew Cappie-Wood, Chief Executive, ACT Chief Minister's Department.



Caption: ABS/ACT Government signing of the IDP by Brian Pink and Andrew Cappie-Wood

The **ACT Information Development Plan 2008-2011** (IDP) was signed on 5 June 2008 by Brian Pink, Australian Statistician and Andrew Cappie-Wood, Chief Executive, ACT Chief Minister's Department.

Developed jointly by the ACT Regional Office of the ABS and the ACT Government, the IDP recognises the key role that quality statistics play in informed decision making within governments, business and the community.

The IDP will assist ACT government departments develop policies and programs by providing a high level strategic framework to improve the quality and availability of statistical information for the ACT in the long term, while protecting confidential information.

Pam Daveron "The ACT IDP is an important step towards improving data for and decision-making by the ACT Government. The next steps are to implement the plan throughout the departments, and continue to refine the strategies we use to achieve its goals."

Government administrative and private transaction record databases are seen as a key source of statistics, with survey-based collections used to supplement, calibrate and bridge gaps in these data.

The ABS and ACT Government recognise each other as partners in developing and improving statistical information, and will continue to collaborate in this work. An Information Development Steering Committee, chaired by the ACT Chief Minister's Department, has been established to implement and monitor the ACT IDP.

To address the statistical development needs and information management priorities discussed in the ACT IDP the following key activities have been identified to provide a framework for advancing the availability and improved quality of statistical information about the ACT. The activities are:

- Identify the key datasets required for policy development and the associated metadata held by each department.
- Facilitate the use of data standards for key datasets.
- Implement a common data quality framework for all departments.
- Increase the capability within and across departments for statistical research and analysis.
- Increase awareness and understanding of ABS data and seek to improve ABS statistics for the ACT.
- Improve the way administrative data is stored and managed.
- Review and improve data on ACT Government services provision.
- Ensure that the community and service providers have feedback on, and access to, information derived from the data they provide.
- Improve the quality of data collected from service providers and ACT Government grant recipients and make better use of this data for planning.
- Develop a capacity to link non-ABS datasets, particularly:
 - on the number of people accessing government services, and
 - on clients with multiple and complex needs and how they access services.

Further details can be found in **ACT Information Development Plan 2008-2011**, available from the ABS website, National Statistical Service website or the ACT Chief Minister's Department website.



Caption: IDP group from left to right: Brian Pink, Dan Stewart, Andrew Cappie-Wood, Gemma Wood, Karen Macdonald

Andrew Cappie-Wood "This Information Development Plan is a landmark for cooperation between the ABS and the ACT Government."

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MAKING SENSE OUT OF STATISTICS

Statistical Language! (cat. no. 1332.0.55.002) is an educational resource from the ABS designed to improve the reader's understanding of some fundamental statistical concepts. It is designed as a stand-alone product accessible through links.

Statistical Language! is written in plain English for adults and aims to provide them with the basic statistical literacy skills to:

- understand key statistical terminology;
- facilitate access to the expanding level of statistical information presented to the public;
- gain confidence with interpreting summarised information;
- appreciate the importance of statistical information in today's society; and
- make critical and informed use of data, whatever its source.

All these goals are at the heart of the ABS mission to assist informed decision making in the Australian community.

Along with simple descriptions, this e-magazine contains examples and diagrams to help users establish a basic understanding of the key statistical topics covered.



Population, Sample and Estimate

Includes: Definitions, What do populations and samples tell us? Which to use in a survey - Population or Sample?

A population is any entire group with at least one common characteristic.

Population

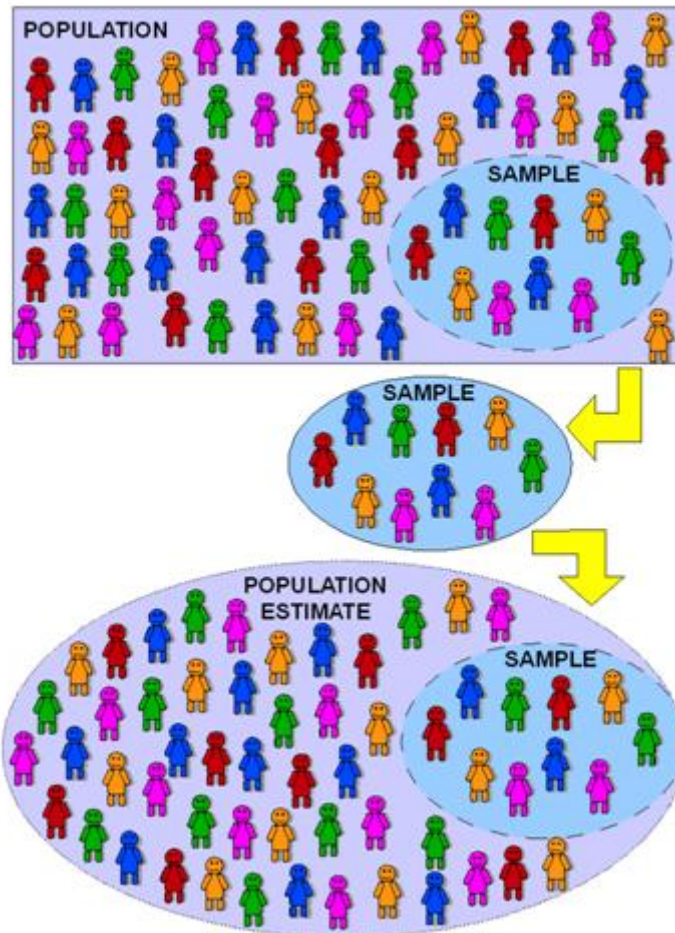
A population is any entire group with at least one characteristic in common. A survey covering the population is commonly called a census. In a census every member of the group is included and the entire group is used to characterise the population.

Sample

A sample is part of a population. It is a subset of the population, often randomly selected for the purpose of studying the characteristics of the entire population.

Estimate

An estimate is information about a population extrapolated from a sample of the population.



For further information contact the National Information and Referral Service on 1300 135 070.

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LAST CHANCE FOR ABS STATISTICAL TRAINING IN 2008

Turning Data Into Information

Overview

This two-day course is intended to provide skills in interpreting, communicating and displaying data clearly and effectively. Participants will gain skills in transforming data into meaningful written information, particularly in respect to social policy issues. At the completion of this course participants will be able to:

- understand how the collection and compilation of data affects their usefulness, quality and relevance;
- communicate results and prepare written reports;
- construct good tables and graphs; and
- recognise possible pitfalls in analysis.

Is this course for me?

This course will be most beneficial to people who need to use data to produce reports or social commentary, or people who are involved with monitoring and evaluation in a social context.

Dates

17 – 18 November 2008

Cost

\$750 (inc. GST) per person

Further Information

For more information about course content, available dates for this course in other capital cities around Australia, or details of how we may be able to tailor or offer a course to meet your specific needs:

Ph: (02) 6252 8900

email: training@abs.gov.au

Or visit the ABS website under 'Services we provide' then 'ABS Training', for further information about external training with ABS.

CANBERRA 2008 COURSE REGISTRATION FORM

Turning Data Into Information

17 – 18 November 2008

Name:
.....

Department/organisation:
.....

Section/branch:
.....

Postal address:
.....

Phone: **Fax:**
.....

email:
.....

Please send invoice to: r Participant (details above)r Other (please provide details below)

.....
.....

.....
.....

Payment details

All course attendance will be invoiced upon completion of the nominated course. Costs include all course materials, a light lunch as well as morning and afternoon teas.

1 day course \$450 (inc. GST)

2 day course \$750 (inc. GST)

Cancellations, in writing, will be accepted 5 working days prior to the course. After this a cancellation fee of 50% of the course fee will be charged. Non-attendance without written notification of cancellation will result in the full fee being charged. Substitutions are allowed at any time.

REGISTER TODAY by returning this completed form to:

Post:

External Training Coordinator

Information & Publication Services

Australian Bureau of Statistics

PO Box 181

Civic Square ACT 2608

Fax: (02) 6247 2389

email: training@abs.gov.au

Phone: (02) 6252 8900 for further information

*** Your booking will be confirmed upon receipt of your registration form. If you have not received confirmation of enrolment within 2 working days, please call (02) 6252 8900.**

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EXPECTED MAJOR ANNUAL & IRREGULAR RELEASES

GENERAL

1205.0.55.001

Information Paper: Cause of Death Certification Australia, 2008 (December)

1329.0

Australian Wine and Grape Industry, 2008 (January)

CENSUS OF POPULATION AND HOUSING

2059.0.55.001

Census of Population and Housing: Australia's Children and Youth, 2006 (December)

2064.0.55.001

CDATA Online Manual, 2007 (December)

DEMOGRAPHY

3201.0

Population by Age and Sex, Australian States and Territories, June 2008 (December)

3228.0.55.001

Population Estimates: Concepts, Sources and Methods, 2007 (November)

3302.0

Deaths, Australia, 2007 (November)

3302.0.55.001

Life Tables, Australia, 2005 to 2007 (November)

3302.8.55.001

Life Tables, Australian Capital Territory, 2005 to 2007 (November)

3302.0.55.002

Discussion Paper: Assessment of Methods for Developing Life Tables for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, 2006 (November)

SOCIAL STATISTICS

4100.0

Technical Manual: Multipurpose Household Survey, Expanded Confidentialised Unit Record File, Technical Manual, 2007-08 (January)

4100.0.55.001

Microdata: Multipurpose Household Survey, Australia, Expanded Confidentialised Unit Record File, 2007-08 (January)

4105.0.55.001

Information Paper: Data Gaps in Early Childhood: Identifying and Bringing Together Available Information, 2008 (November)

4207.0

Early Years Learning, June 2008, (December)

4220.0

Schools, Australia, Preliminary, 2008 (February)

4326.0.30.001

National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing: Basic Confidentialised Unit Record File, 2008 (February)

4326.0.30.002

National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing: Expanded Confidentialised Unit Record File, 2008 (February)

4327.0

National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing of Adults: User's Guide, 2008 (November)

4329.0

Technical Manual: National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing, Confidentialised Unit Record File, 2007 (February)

4513.0

Criminal Courts, Australia, 2007-08 (January)

4517.0

Prisoners in Australia, 2008 (December)

4602.0.55.001

Environmental Issues: Energy Use and Conservation, March 2008, (November)

4626.0.55.001

Environmental Views and Behaviour, 2007-2008 (January)

4722.0.55.005

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Home Ownership: A Snapshot, 2006 (December)

4723.0

Information Paper: Census Data Enhancement - Indigenous Mortality Quality Study, 2006-07 (November)

4838.0

Chronic Disease in Adults, Australia, 2004-05 (December)

4916.0

Information Paper: Towards Comparable Statistics for Cultural Heritage Organisations, 2008 (November)

NATIONAL ACCOUNTS, INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND FINANCE**5220.0**

Australian National Accounts: State Accounts, 2007-08 (November)

5368.0.55.006

Number and Characteristics of Australian Exporters, 2007-08 (March)

5678.0

Venture Capital and Later Stage Private Equity, Australia, 2007-08 (February)

LABOUR STATISTICS AND PRICES**6227.0**

Education and Work, Australia, May 2008 (November)

6461.0

Australian Consumer Price Index: Concepts, Sources and Methods, 2008 (December)

AGRICULTURE**7111.0**

Principal Agricultural Commodities, Australia, Preliminary, 2007-08 (November)

7121.0.55.002

Agricultural Survey, Apples and Pears, Australia, 2007-08 (December)

7122.0.55.001

Stocks of Grain Held by Bulk Handling Companies and Grain Traders, Australia, December 2008 (January)

7501.0

Value of Principal Agricultural Commodities Produced, Australia, Preliminary, 2007-08 (February)

SECONDARY INCOME AND DISTRIBUTION**8129.0**

Business Use of Information Technology, 2006-07 (December)

8146.0

Household Use of Information Technology, Australia, 2007-08 (December)

8165.0

Counts of Australian Businesses, Including Entries and Exits, June 2003 to June 2008 (December)

TRANSPORT**9309.0**

Motor Vehicle Census, Australia, 31 March 2008 (November)

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About this Release

ABStract - Statistical News: Australian Capital Territory provides new and relevant information about survey developments, information and training sessions, user consultations, major changes to the statistical program, state/territory data releases and significant ABS data releases.

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